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ABSTRACT

This working paper is a product of a regional study in industrial South Wales of the determinants of participation and non-participation in post-compulsory education and training, with special reference to processes of change in the patterns of these determinants over time and to variations between geographical areas. Based on this data, three alternative ideal-typical orientations to education and training are proposed to supplant the current utilitarian human capital model. Type A orientation holds that if there is some knowledge or skill that is required on the job, then either it will be picked up as the employee or potential employee goes along, or the employer should arrange for the employee to acquire it. Type B orientation, credentialism, holds that education and training credentials give one a better chance of the job one wants, but considers the actual content of the education and training to be unimportant. Type C orientation holds that one should educate oneself before one gets the job so that one will be able to do the job better. Employers usually hold to Types A and B orientations. Type B, which is closest to the human capital theory, has been the determinant of educational and economic policy in the United Kingdom (UK), but this orientation may not be helpful to economic success in the country. Those countries, such as Germany, which have been more successful, have more Type C oriented-workers who prize education for its own sake and for making them better workers. Thus, the UK's policy of producing more Type B-oriented workers may not improve the country's economic position, despite enormous amounts of money spent on training. (Contains 72 references.) (KC)

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PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION IN ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A Cardiff and Bristol University ESRC- funded Learning Society Project

WORKING PAPER 3

Some Sociological Alternatives to Human Capital Theory and Their Implications for Research on Post-Compulsory Education and Training

Ralph Fevre
1997

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Ralph Fevre

with Gareth Rees, John Furlong and Stephen Gorard

INTRODUCTION

The empirical problem that this paper addresses is familiar to many UK researchers. Relatively poor rates of education and training in the UK and widening education and training gaps between the UK and competitor economies (Hugill and Narayan, 1995; Pyke, 1996) are judged to be important causes of relative economic failure (Roderick and Stephens, 1981; Sanderson, 1972, 1988; Steedman et al, 1991). Low absolute rates and declining relative performance in education and training are especially marked in patterns of participation in post-compulsory education and training (POCET) and here the link to relative economic failure is thought to be particularly strong, especially when economic success is defined in terms of a high-skill and high-wage equilibrium (Finegold and Soskice, 1988; also see Cutler, 1992; Green and Ashton, 1992; Istance and Rees, 1994; Keep, 1991; McNabb and Whitfield, 1994; NIESR, 1994; Smithers and Robinson, 1991)

Our study of patterns of participation in POCET is taking place in South Wales, a region which reproduces the characteristic UK pattern (minority elite achievement in education and training combined with a lower median than competitor countries with a much longer tail of low achievement) only more so (elite achievement in Wales has suffered relative decline when compared to the rest of the UK - Rees and Istance, 1994). South Wales provides a particularly

good example of the typical UK pattern (Prais, 1993) of sparse and poor-quality training at craft and intermediate levels when compared to competitor economies. These training failures may be closely tied to early educational experience: one recent study of South Wales engineering firms - 83% of whom had experienced skill shortages - pointed out how training was hindered by a lack of very basic skills in maths and English (Cockrill, Scott and Fitz, 1996).

In this paper I will suggest that the explanation for the prevalence of such patterns in the UK (and, in particular, South Wales) should not begin with the government or the employers but rather with the people who have (or have not) been educated and trained. It is therefore the orientations of these people to education and training (developed under the influence of school, peers and family) that are of most interest here yet according to the theory which underlies most explanations of participation patterns (especially in POCET) there is really nothing much to find out.

In human capital theory people participate in education and training in order to increase their future earnings - these earnings may increase because they will thereby make themselves more productive workers but this is not an essential part of the theory (Gambetta, 1987:132) - and they weigh the costs of current investment in education/training against future benefits from higher incomes. Now, this is not an obvious and incontrovertible fact of human behaviour but a particular modern incarnation of Utilitarianism. The term "human capital" was used by Theodore W. Schultz in 1960 who points out that the great Utilitarian thinker John Stuart Mill (in The Principles of Political Economy) rejected the application of the notion of capital to human beings. Nevertheless, human capital is a Utilitarian idea.

Human capital theory was handed down to us not by Schultz but by another economist (Gary Becker (1962, 1975). What Becker was interested in (both here and in other work such as Becker 1957, 1976) was extending economic theory to explain all human behaviour. Sociology would of course dispute the legitimacy of this enterprise. While economic calculation may sometimes influence behaviour once thought immune to it, the relative merits of sociological and economic explanations are a matter for empirical investigation in each case.

Other social scientists who do not know the provenance of the idea of investment in human capital seem to accept it as the statement of some sort of natural law: education/training is about people investing in human capital. By way of contrast, I want to argue that, from the classical tradition of European sociology - epitomised in this paper by Durkheim, still the most potent critic of Utilitarianism - we cannot accept human capital theory in this way. Instead I would argue that human capital theory may be a logical outcome of the sort of reasoning Utilitarians get up to but it does not help us to understand human behaviour. Human capital theory is based on Utilitarian assumptions and those assumptions are just as wrong as they ever were when Durkheim first criticised them in The Division of Labour in Society.

I am convinced by Durkheim's sociological critique of Utilitarian non-sociology and so wary from the start of all the modern versions of Utilitarian theory (Homans, 1950, 1961; Blau, 1964) - and the same must go for its particular incarnation in human capital theory. In this paper I aim to show that there are sociological alternatives to the notion of investment in human capital that fit the empirical facts much more closely. A more sociological theory rejects the naive assumptions that Utilitarian thought makes when it thinks of the determinants of human behaviour. In particular, human capital repeats the age-old Utilitarian error of misrepresenting the behaviour which sociology can explain as the outcome of innate behavioural characteristics of each self-serving individual.

I consider that there is little point in trying to weigh the evidence on whether "investment" in education and training really does produce a return since the research on this topic is either contradictory or inconclusive (Edwards et al, 1993; McNabb and Whitfield 1994; Maguire et al, 1993; NIACE, 1994; Roberts et al, 1991). Instead I wish to investigate the empirical evidence for replacing the human capital model with three alternative, ideal-typical, orientations to education and training. In the present paper this investigation is far from systematic and it is hoped that the empirical research we have embarked on in South Wales will, in time, provide the more detailed and rigorous support these ideal types require.

1. THE PRIMACY OF JOBS

The ESRC programme (the 16-19 Initiative) on education and training that preceded the Learning Society programme under which our own research is funded collected valuable ethnographic material. Let us begin with a summary of the orientations of some YTS trainees:

> "One welcome feature of going to college for the purposes of off-the-job training for these girls was that it provided an opportunity to get away from home and mix with friends and "enemies". Here its perceived benefits stopped. The official modularised curriculum, consisting of a mixture of "caring skills", science, communications, social studies and "options", was regarded as irrelevant and reminiscent of school, which the group had already rejected: "When I finish I'm gonna get all them modules, put them in a bonfire and burn the lot". Time in college was valued as time to be with friends, to argue or "have a laff" and "fool around". Set tasks in lessons were performed in a tokenistic way (four or five lines of writing in a one-hour session) and much time was spent instead on doing one anthers hair, passing around mail-order catalogues, reading magazines, trooping off early to coffee and coming back late...
>
> In order to motivate such students it may be important to recognise that vocational "relevance", broadly defined, will not suffice. "Really useful knowledge" in the eyes of this group was that which has direct and immediate application within their currently preferred occupation." (Bates et al, 1992:82).

Similar evidence was gathered by Rees, Williamson and Istance (1996) when explaining high drop out rates from post-16 courses in schools and colleges in South Wales. These courses were disliked and only used as a temporary shelter from unemployment or where there was some chance of them leading directly to jobs. Declining numbers accepted training places and a large minority (up to one in five of the age group) were neither in training nor employment as a result. These were usually young people who had rejected school at an early stage and did not think education mattered as far as the labour market was concerned. They rejected YT for similar reasons: they did not see it as real training and YT was not seen as relevant to a job.

Rees et al did not find that the young people who rejected YT differed from others in their age group in terms of "primary socialisation" or "subculture" (1996:231) and indeed we have already seen that similar orientations could be found amongst those who (reluctantly) submitted themselves to YTS. Furthermore, such views can also be found amongst those undergoing higher-level training, for example, BTEC National Diploma students doing vocational training who were researched as part of the 16-19 Initiative:

> "But you could do without a lot you do at college, but I think it is a lot more relevant than what you do at school but still it is not relevant. I don't know, I don't think any place of learning, any course of study, can be relevant to real life. It is good that you learn the theory behind things, but it is when you are taught what you already know and you go over it again and again and again and the teacher is doing something you'll never use, you know." (Riseborough, 1993:50)
>
> "... he doesn't make [bookkeeping] relevant, he doesn't make it interesting. Bookkeeping is relevant because you have to do it in a hotel but the way he does it. He never mentions hotels or catering, he doesn't apply it in any way." (ibid., 51)

The 16-19 Initiative also relied on surveys to complement the ethnographies and these showed that

> "Poor educational attainment, strong work commitment, dislike of new technology and training are all interrelated. Their manifestation at 16, and the persistence of the relationships with career trajectory beyond it, suggests that much of whatever it is that prompts young people to embark on particular career routes at age 16 - whether to stay on in education or to leave - is laid down earlier in life in the family and in the peer group." (Banks et al, 1992:47)
>
> "Thus not only does access to higher education need to be opened up, but also the attitudes of the young need changing so that investment in further training and education is seen as a positively desirable goal by larger numbers than at present." (ibid., 51)

And in South Wales, when employees were asked about on-the-job training, this was the response:

> "...nearly half of the production operatives want no further training, feeling that they have already had sufficient for the tasks which they currently undertake and are likely to do in the future, given their realistic prospects of promotion." (Rees, Fielder and Rees, 1992a:5)

There is undoubtedly a history of negative views on education and training amongst the British working class. In South Wales in 1861 Education Commissioners reported:

> "In the day-schools the practice of early-leaving could not be attributed to the poverty of the parents or to the necessity for children to supplement the family income or "to improvidence, or other causes of inability in the population". Such reasons undoubtedly existed but only partly accounted for the phenomenon. The paramount reason - common to all the industrial districts - was the want of appreciation by parents of the importance "to the future welfare of their children, of education being carried out beyond the time at which they are at present withdrawn from school. "
>
> "It is worth probing deeper into this observation because early school-leaving was prevalent in those districts where sobriety and good conduct were characteristic of the people; the houses were well-furnished, the children were comfortably clothed, and the population attended places of worship regularly:
> "it appears to be not so much a simple want of appreciation of the value of education as a low estimate of what education consists in, combined with a notion always much strengthened by the prospect of immediate pecuniary advantages resulting from the children's labour, that as much additional learning as may be required can be obtained hereafter as occasion for it may arise".
> ... Other parents argued that their children should obtain only as much education as was necessary "for their sphere of life" - and this

estimation on their part was by no means generous." (Wynne-Evans, 1951:208-9)

Of course the solution to this problem was to make the education compulsory, but the problem did not disappear, it just found a different mode of expression:

> "Lindsay and Cole for example both noted that the prospect of another years schooling, as canvassed by Tawney in 1922 and proposed by Hadow in 1926 met only with "disapproval" and "criticism" in working-class districts. In addition Lindsay was much struck by the fact that in such districts, "the number of refusals of fee places, exceeded the number of acceptances", whilst Glass for his part reflected at length on what he described as "the social class imagery of the secondary school"." (Murphy 1990:32)

Murphy also claims that when discussion of a higher leaving age began again in the 1950s the working class were still opposed to it (Murphy, 1990:41).

How can all of this evidence be summed up in one ideal type of orientation towards education and training? I suggest this:

Type A holds that if there is some knowledge or skill which is required on the job I aspire to then either I will pick it up as I go along or the employer should arrange for me to acquire it in some other way.

In this ideal type knowledge and skill is only valued for its immediate pay-off and is never seen as intrinsically valuable. Now, if it is your view that when something is required for the job which you do not possess it is up to the employer to make sure you acquire it, then you are quite likely to end up with non-transferable skills if you acquire any at all. This is because such non-transferable skills do not make you attractive to other employers out to poach your employers" workers and so your employer's investment in training will be protected. Thus a study of South Wales firms found

> "... that the overwhelming emphasis is upon training programmes which are firm-specific. This is true not only of the "routine"

> provision of induction and training directly related to the management of production, quality assurance and so forth, but also of those programmes which are aimed at enabling an employee to move upwards within the ILM. In part, this reflects the objective of socialising employees into an appropriate "employment culture" ... Equally, this form of training ... is intended to attach employees ineluctably to the firm, minimising as far as possible labour turnover and thereby maximising returns on the employer's investment. Indeed, it is increasingly the case that even where training programmes are formally certificated, larger employers are going to considerable lengths to ensure that the institutions providing the training, most frequently the colleges of further education, are laying on what amounts to "bespoke" course, not infrequently, for instance, installing their own machinery for the use of their trainees in college-based provision. " (Rees, 1992:7; also see Rees, Fielder and Rees, 1992b)

In fact it is highly likely that you and your employer share the same attitudes to education and training anyway:

> "In general terms, therefore, what is perhaps most striking is that employees (in common with the majority of employers) do not regard training as transformative. It is not regarded, on the whole, as a means whereby employers can affect long-term improvements in the quality of their operations, nor as providing a route through which employees can change their occupation or their experience of employment." (Rees, Fielder and Rees, 1992a:9)

At least in the UK (and especially in South Wales) employers are just like the rest of us in that they reject on principle generic education and training in favour of what they understand to be "really useful" and "relevant" training which is directly related to the job. And note that they, just like their employees, have opposed a higher school-leaving age, for example in 1928 (Grint, 1995:59 - Grint also discusses "the concerns of management development professionals that management training must be "relevant", "skill-based" and "competency based" - also see NIESR, 1994). The South Wales study quoted above continues:

> " ... basic induction training and learning by observing other workers and by experience ... remain the characteristic forms of training provision across large sections of the economy. In part, this reflects a failure of many employers to appreciate the role which adequate training can perform generally in respect of increasing labour productivity, reducing labour turnover and so forth. Equally, however, it confirms the widely recognised relative failure of many firms to innovate both in product and process technologies.
> "Even where some investment is made in employee training, in many establishments this is restricted to minimalist responses to immediate production requirements. For example, the installation of a new machine may require short-term training for the employees who will be directly engaged in operating it; training which is more often than not provided by the equipment supplier. Even recruitment to craft apprenticeships is determined by immediate demand ... Certainly, in these circumstances, there is little indication of employers adopting a strategy of purposive integration of training provision into the development of production organisation over the longer term." (Rees, 1992:10)

In another report on the same study "a large majority of the employees interviewed believed that training opportunities for those in employment, as well as the unemployed, should be structured and provided by the state" (Rees, Fielder and Rees, 1992a:8). This is a characteristic and important aspect of the UK environment: in the UK the usual idea has been that the users and hence the proper providers of education and training are employers and the state (perhaps representing the country as a whole) rather than the individuals who are educated and trained.

Type A orientations leave the onus for the development of skills and knowledge on the shoulders of employers who will insist on very little education and training and what they do insist on will be firm-specific, "non-transformative" or "mimetic" (see the quotation from Grint below). This is exactly the sort of approach which is guaranteed not to lead to the development of a high-wage, high-skill economy. People are satisfied with this of course, satisfied because the

training they get is relevant to a job (to that job as it is now, as it will stay) and this is all they desire. But surely Type A does not adequately describe the orientations of all British citizens? For example while Type A might well apply to the long tail of people with no, or very little, education and training, what of the highly-qualified elite? For example, work-based training is far more common among those in occupational classes A and B and less common for classes D and E (Harrison, 1993; DfEe, 1995) and McGivney (1991) thinks adult education is a middle-class preserve.

2. CREDENTIALISM

Once more we return to the ethnographies from the 16-19 Project but this time to a girl at a private school:

> "Oh well yes, everyone follows the same route. Even the youngest children here are told they'll do their O-levels, then their As, and then they'll go to university. That's what everyone does. Its considered really weird to want to go to work or even to go to a college."

The ethnographer adds:

> "There was also a high degree of uniformity in the higher education courses and careers that pupils wanted to pursue after A-levels. The most frequently named courses were those most difficult to get into at university, and those requiring the highest grades. Medicine, law, accountancy and veterinary science were popular, as were foreign languages, architecture and business management." (Roker, 1993: 128)

Since this sort of behaviour is obviously much closer to the sort of thing human capital theory assumes is common to everyone, there is probably little point in providing further illustrations from empirical research and I will move quickly to the ideal-type that I think best describes the orientations which lie behind the achievements of those, like the girls at Roker's private school, who seem to value education and training. In my formulation this type is shorn of referents to the language of economics ("capital", "investment"):

Type B holds that education and training credentials give me a better chance of the job I want because they prove I am a better person than the other candidates (or at least that is what the employer will think - anyway you have to have some way of choosing your recruits don't you?)

This alternative Type B orientation which apparently does not lead those who hold to it to conclude that it is up to the employer to arrange their education and training but nevertheless still does not take the users education and training to be the people who are educated and trained. This paradox arises because the Type B orientation - at least at face value, we must allow for deep cynicism beneath the surface - accepts the doctrine of credentialism that we have to get educational credentials (or, more rarely, training credentials) in order to improve our labour-market chances.

I suggest that it is Type B credentialism that is what is usually mistaken for investment in human capital. This is the sort of mistake sociologists have been pointing out for generations (at least since Marx): mistaking the product of one culture or set of circumstances for the universal or fundamental form. Now, contrary to what human capital theory might lead us to accept, Type B is a minority view. It is an increasingly popular one in the UK, however, although, again in contradiction to human capital theory, this is not necessarily a good thing. Type B has informed most of those people who have benefited from the post-war expansion of higher education, for example, and that it is as influential amongst part-time MBA students as it is in the sixth-form classroom, but is it really any more helpful (in the context of UK decline and the prospect of a low-wage economy) than Type A?

With credentialism people still consider the content of their education and training content to be relatively unimportant and they are certainly not thinking that they should be acquiring knowledge or skills which will make them better at their jobs. This is not their aim, not their concern, and such matters are left up to employers (who have, as I keep emphasising, very limited priorities). I suspect that people who adopt the credentialist view have never actually abandoned the more common Type A orientations. They continue to believe that what cannot be picked up on the job is not worth knowing.

People who hold to credentialism also feel they are owed an education whereas people who still retain the unencumbered Type A orientation do not feel they are owed anything. To the extent that this orientation still prevails, amongst the working class for instance, the pool of unsatisfied customers for education and training tends to dry up. The expansion of higher education was fuelled by the adoption of credentialism amongst those moving out of the working class, and frequently actually recovering their place in the middle class (Jackson and Marsden, 1962).

I am therefore suggesting that Type B is a middle-class variant of (or overlay on) the more general UK-wide education and training culture and certainly it would be wrong (despite the rhetoric frequently employed in such discussions) to identify the feeling that one is owed an education with some sort of principled commitment to equality of opportunity. The belief in cost-free (to the individual) education and training need not arise from a socialist commitment to equality of access but could, for example, just as easily be interpreted as the right of those who display innate superiority of intellect.

Before I leave the topic of credentialism there are two more points to consider. It may be true that students in higher education, for example, will not admit that they are at university in order to acquire credentials rather than to acquire knowledge and skills. Now I could argue that they leave university with the credentials and without the knowledge and skills but this begs the question of their intentions and understanding. My point is this: individuals might well explain their behaviour - especially when concerned with questions of legitimacy - in terms of acquiring knowledge and skills but this explaining is itself seen as part of the process of getting the credentials in question. Of course people may take the business of appearing to have a thirst for knowledge "seriously" while they are students, and this role-playing probably gets many of them through university where blatant credentialism would not.

My second point concerns Felstead's recent (1996) research which shows that the improvement in female educational achievement amongst girls - so often now surpassing that of males - does not extend to vocational qualifications. This is also the case in South Wales:

> "... even within occupational groups, significant disparities exist. Hence, for example, it is far more likely that a female production operative has received no or minimal training than a male equivalent. Even for the manager/supervisor group, women's training is overwhelmingly up-dating or retraining, whilst men's is far more likely to be directed towards the acquisition of qualifications and career development." (Rees, Fielder and Rees, 1992a:5)

Women's progress in acquiring vocational qualifications is much less marked and, in some fields, has yet to begin. Now this is just what one might expect if the improved academic performance of women arises from their being turned onto credentialism by parents, teachers and peers (also see Gambetta, 1987:149). Academic qualifications are much easier to fit into the credentialist world-view and it is in the non-vocational field that we would expect conversion to credentialism to have its first effect on behaviour.

3. TYPE C

It is not hard to find evidence of Types A and B orientations to education and training in the UK but what is lacking is evidence of a third type, the sort of orientation that I will argue lies behind the analysis presented by Wolfgang Streeck. Streeck is an expert on the German vocational education and training system. In 1989 he wrote a short article in Work, Employment and Society in which he argued that (West) Germany had something in addition to the normal Type A orientations which make it so difficult to develop general skills (1989:98). This added extra meant that Germany did not experience the same skill shortages as, for example, the US or the UK, and had a competitive edge over such countries, particularly when modernisation was required.

According to Streeck, training in (West) Germany did not depend on what the employers chose to insist on but rather on the government, public opinion, the chambers of commerce, the trades unions and the works councils. Without this extra pressure the skills needed for modernisation would not be developed, either by the state (1989:97-8) or by employers (who would only provide firm-specific skills whereas general skills were required, 1989:94-5). In my terms, such

general skills develop where the users of education and training are taken to be the people who are educated and trained. For this to happen people must have the following sort of orientation towards education and training:
Type C holds that I should educate and train myself before I get the job so that I will be able to do it better (and this should not be confused with training yourself to get a better job, an attitude which is common enough in the UK but is an example of the sort of credentialism described under Type B)

The relative prevalence of the three ideal types of orientation to education and training varies according to time and place. Thus orientations in Finland might recall those of the UK but this was not always so (and perhaps it was not always so in the UK - I will return to this point below):

> "Representatives of the oldest generation respected education in general, although they did not depict their own time spent in compulsory school attendance as at all pleasant. Representatives of the youngest generation found secondary school and the upper forms of comprehensive school (or the former intermediate school) boring, tiring and oppressive." (Antikainen et al, 1996: 62)

All the industrialised countries have evidence of all three types but it is my contention (also see Bynner, 1989 who thinks that self-identity is more wrapped up in getting a job in the UK leading to less emphasis on learning). that the UK has less of Type C than more successful competitors like Germany (and perhaps less of Type B than the United States). The prevalence of this orientation in the cultures of competitor countries goes a long way towards explaining the superiority of education and training in those countries and so also helps to explain their economic success and the UK's relative failure.

The state and employers must depend (they have no alternative) on having the right sort of orientation in order to make education/training have the desired sort of effect on economic performance. Take the UK: we heard something of how little British employers do and so the education and training that goes on in the UK is largely determined by the initiatives taken by the state. The problem with much of this state-sponsored activity lies in the well-recognised weak relationship between such provision and the requirements of employers. Thus the state may

have expanded educational provision at all levels but the same could not be said of training provision (for example, consider the dismantling of NEDO training). This imbalance has been recognised (but hardly redressed) in a number of recent initiatives including NVQs and TECs.

These initiatives help to contribute to the impression that the UK's post-16 education and training provision is increasing (from its very low base) but there seems to be a serious risk (especially with a Conservative government) that the UK will veer towards the US model of higher participation rates but with much education and training being of dubious value. I have already pointed out that vibrant credentialism exists in other countries, particularly the US (hence the attention paid to it by Berg, 1971 and Collins, 1979 as well as by Dore, 1976 and Bourdieu, 1988) and perhaps in a some other countries where education provision has expanded in the same way.

The actions of the state can be more effective in societies where the workforce are seen by all as the users of education and training. For instance, Rees, Fielder and Rees (1992a:8) note that in South Wales "in marked contrast with the situation in other European countries, training opportunities feature on the agenda of collective bargaining in only a most limited way". In societies which have more competitive economies than the UK, the crucial connection between state provision and the needs of the economy is made by the people who are being educated and trained and the proof of this lies not just in the low level of education and training but also in the content of the education and training they receive.

Where this vital connection is not made much education and training is limited ("non-transformative", "mimetic") and even practically useless as far as the economy is concerned but, to repeat, the connection can only be made by the people using education and training and it will only be made by them if they have the right sort of understanding of education and training. They make this connection when they choose education and training to help them work better, when they choose education and training with generic vocational content, and in how they approach and value the education and training they receive. The connection between state education/training and employment is very weak (anywhere) unless it is made by the people being educated and trained. I want to

suggest that what I have called the right sort of understanding of education and training can only develop in the UK if cultural change occurs. In order to find out what sort of change might be required we need to look both to Germany (and other countries with similar orientations to education and training) and to our own history.

Streeck argues that it is easier for countries like Germany and Japan, with their "heritage of community bonds" to create the skills needed for modernisation than it is for market societies like the US and the UK (1989:91). He thinks that just as the job-specific concerns of employers are not enough to guarantee the creation of such skills, so also is the self-interested behaviour of individuals insufficient (1989:91). He argues that "rational investment in the longer-term pursuit of individual interests" is in fact impossible (1989:92) and that training conceived either as "voluntary-rational-utilitarian investment" or as a right of citizenship will not produce the skills needed. What is required, says Streeck, is that the acquisition of be seen as an obligation (1989:93). This sense of obligation is much more likely to arise in Germany and Japan than it does in the US and the UK:

> "It is no accident that the Japanese way of skilling and the German "dual system", which a few years ago would have been regarded as remnants of a less "modern" past, are attracting growing attention. Much to our surprise, "premodern" institutions with their high mutual interpenetration of functions and social arenas often seem to perform better in a period of change and uncertainty than "modern" functionally differentiated institutions." (Streeck, 1989:99).

Now, in order to explore further the sense of "moral obligations and close communitarian bonds" (1989:100) which Streeck identifies as the route cause of commitment to what I would call a Type C orientation, we need to turn to history and to South Wales. I have already noted that the relative prevalence of the three types of orientation can change over time as well as between places and hinted that there may have been a time when British (like Finnish) attitudes were different. The culture of adult education in South Wales in the first half of the twentieth century is popularly supposed to have been diametrically opposed to the logics of instrumentalism and credentialism. Of course the benefits of workers education in Wales were unevenly distributed - this education

> "...eschewed any role in helping individuals who wished to rise to a higher status in life. [It] sought to raise the working class in general, not to assist those of ability to leave their class background. Yet despite the rhetoric..., it was the activist, the bright, the energetic and the visionary elements amongst the working classes that were to be the main targets of workers" education." (Richard Lewis, Leaders and Teachers, quoted in Rees 1996)

But the point remains that these activists were believed to actually value learning, in fact to enjoy it so much that they did it voluntarily and without recompense of any kind in the brief leisure hours between shifts at the coal face. (There is a curious parallel here in Banks et al 1992:104 which reports on the uniquely positive and non-instrumental attitudes towards education taken by a group of more left-wing sixth-formers in the 1980s.)

Through research on material in the South Wales Coalfield Archive our project will help to determine how much truth there was in such popular stereotypes, but even if we find them to be the product of romantic exaggeration, I would suggest that our attraction to such romance is easily explained: we want to believe it because we unconsciously recognise a set of circumstances which might well produce this sort of unusual attitude towards education and training. In particular, the social and political culture in which Miners Institutes came into being gave people an alternative to individualism and so we think people who would not be bothered to read Hegel for themselves would do it for the sake of the Communist Party or the working class.

I want to argue that to make a strong connection between state education/training and employment a society needs an alternative - in the form of group loyalties - to the logic of individualism. This logic is certainly prevalent in the UK (once more, see Banks et al, 1992; Bates and Riseborough, 1993) but Streeck would also single out the US and Antikainen et al, 1996 discuss increased individualism in Finnish society accompanying the spread of attitudes close to those I describe as Types A and B. I suggest that individualism does not produce the attitudes towards education and training that we need anywhere in the world - these attitudes are produced instead by group loyalties: in Germany to the beruf, in

Japan to the company, and loyalty to the family or clan in Asian (including Chinese) communities throughout the world (see Dore 1973, 1987; and for Asian communities in the UK see some of the contributors to Ballard, 1994). In these cases people voluntarily submit to education and training for the groups sake.

Streeck does not point it out - and since his target is really the Neo-liberal view of superiority of the market there is no reason why he should - but the suggestion that a commitment to groups underpins individuals' decisions to embark on Type C training to help them do their jobs more effectively of course recalls what Durkheim had to say about group affiliation in general and occupational associations in particular (first in The Division of Labour in Society, then later in Professional Ethics). For Durkheim, the alternative to the old traditions which modern society had no time for was of course moral individualism but, famously, he reserved a place for group loyalties too. The occupational associations in which Durkheim placed his faith are surely not far removed in theoretical terms from the company loyalties, and surely identical with the craft loyalties, that I suggest are responsible for generating and reproducing Type C attitudes towards education and training in Japan and Germany? Thus Streeck considers that

> "... there is little doubt that in certain artisanal communities, where training and the rituals of examination and admissions are the focus of communal life and collective identity, a sense of moral obligation still plays a major part in the operation of industrial training." (Streeck, 1989:100)

I would suggest that craft loyalty is something the German system loses at great cost. This loyalty may well have been weakened since Streeck was writing in fact, and it is interesting that recent attempts to revitalise German VET are prepared to put considerable emphasis on re-invigorating the idea of beruf (Brown, 1996). As an aside it is worth pointing out that the family loyalties I briefly mentioned were just the sort of thing Durkheim assumed the industrial societies had lost - here, as in other cases, the Asian example has so far proved him wrong. There was no need for moral individualism in industrialising Japan to the extent that traditional values were consciously retained and energetically defended. To this extent I agree with Streeck on the question of "premodern" institutions.

4. SIGNS OF CHANGE: compensation and generic vocational content

I have argued that the UK (in contrast to Germany or Japan for instance) has not had the prevalent orientation which leads people to believe they should undergo education and training before getting a job so that they will able to do that job better (once more, we should be careful to avoid confusing this with undergoing training to get a better job which is simply a variety of credentialism). If I am correct about the implied relationship between the absent orientation and industrial competitiveness, our regional study will be concerned, amongst other things, with looking for evidence of movement away from traditional orientations and towards the missing Type C orientation. For example, we will be looking for evidence of movement away from the attitude that education and training are something that must be put up with, something which people have to be forced to do, or compensated (in time or money) for doing.

The people who reject education and training and the people who accept its value in the production of credentials - and feel they are owed the chance to earn these credentials - all feel they must be compensated for putting up with education and training if they have to undergo it. All sorts of people believe they should actually be paid - either with time off (day release has always been more popular than night school) or with grants or subsequent salary increases - for putting themselves to the inconvenience of acquiring some education and training. This is a key feature of UK attitudes (but perhaps one that has not as long a history as might first be assumed). The majority of training is paid for by employers (DfEe, 1995; Employment Department Group, 1994; Greenhalgh and Mavrotas, 1994; Park, 1994) and 90% of people receiving job-related training are fully paid while they do it (DfEe, 1995). A key indicator of relevant change in attitudes towards education and training would be if we could find people who no longer thought they needed to be compensated for undergoing it.

This discussion clearly raises the question of parents" paying for the education of their children, an increasingly common practice in England (but not in Wales - Gorard, 1996). In fact, I do not consider this to be evidence of a helpful change in peoples orientations. When people make increasing use of private education they are certainly prepared to pay but they have not changed their fundamental belief about who the users of education and training are at all. Instead they see

themselves as purchasers of (or speculators in) qualifications and not as buyers off the substance of education and training.

People who pay for private education do not suspend the rule about having to be compensated for undergoing education and training when they calculate its labour-market pay-off, rather they put that rule into practice! There is no generic vocational relevance in this education/training: private education certainly gives credentials and cultural accomplishments but it is not the solution to Britain's economic decline (and probably actually turns many people off manufacturing industry for instance) and it would be foolish to mistake it for evidence of Type C orientations.

As this brief discussion of private education suggests, a second indication of fundamental change would be if we found evidence of people changing the way they think about the content of their education and training, moving away from the idea of direct relevance and/or simple credential-relevance towards what I have been calling "generic vocational relevance". This is a difficult term to define but let me offer some guidance to its meaning short of a formal definition. By generic vocational relevance I mean more than transferable skills and, for an example, I might perhaps turn to Bates et al (1992) who reminds us that the employee selling us an electrical product in a German store will understand the way that product was made and the way in which it functions at a level which would astound their British counterpart.

As far as the British "shop assistant" is concerned the important point is a simple one to grasp: s/he is a shop assistant and the definition of her/his job does not imply knowledge of electronic engineering. In a Type A culture the job has primacy and gives meaning to everything around it, especially to any education or training that goes on. The job is the point of the thing and the person who is recruited to do it must, above all else, fit that job, and this means that knowledge and competences make no sense unless they are embedded.

In effect, there is something in our culture that prevents many of us from making a connection between knowledge (though not, obviously, the demonstration of a job) and performance. Consider what Grint has to say about management for example.

> "In sum, those who engaged in business tended to be self-taught or apprenticed individuals whose skill was measured by the degree to which they could replicate what their forebears had been able to do. It was this mimetic approach to knowledge which has been held responsible for the inability of British business to develop and sustain leading business technologies." (Grint, 1995:58)

Grint agrees with Constable and McCormick (1987) that innate ability and job experience are still regarded as the most important determinant of effective management (Grint, 1995:60).

The job itself is privileged over anything more general and, to use a highly suggestive analogy, it is as if a restricted code is keeping out an elaborated one. Something like an elaborated code might be found in the professions but there are of course very few professionals in UK (but not German) manufacturing and you might say that the professional ethic and the dominant ethic of UK industry are more or less antithetical. In support of this, consider only the subordinate status - in comparison to their overseas counterparts - of those few professionals, but especially engineers, who do work in UK manufacturing (also see Burns and Stalker, 1961).

As I have already indicated, attitudes towards the content of education/training are related to the view that education is something that must be borne (rather than enjoyed, for example). At present, people must be forced to undergo education and training, or be compensated for having to subject themselves to it, but if they are forced or compensated let the subject also be "interesting" and not too demanding. I suggest that this attitude works to exclude generic vocational education and training. The exclusion of generic vocational relevance is part of the compensation package - with it education and training would be over-priced.

Throughout this paper I have suggested that the only hope of changing the environment for education and training in the UK lies in cultural change, change which will, for example, bring about the development of the sorts of orientation to education/training which will make UK workers see themselves as the users of education/training and so make the missing connection with industry and the

economy. But surely this is a message without hope given the glacier-like pace of the sort of cultural change involved and the fact that such change is either impervious to the reform of policy or institutions or only effected by the sorts of policy or institutions developed in much less voluntarist societies than Britain's?

Durkheim would suggest otherwise - change in the division of labour can move mountains (or glaciers). And we have had such change in South Wales, lots of it, with the disappearance of some traditional industries and the drastic reduction of employment in the rest. Where jobs have been replaced they are in new manufacturing sectors or the service sector and in both cases there are far more jobs for women than there used to be. It is important not to jump to conclusions, however since careful sociology warns us that the effect of this sort of change is rarely direct.

We might think that the change we seek comes about because people look around them, work out what is going on, and then find new solutions they can, for example, pass onto their children (this is one way of interpreting the material presented by Jordan, Redley and James, 1994), but this is not how Durkheim would have theorised the connection between social/industrial change and new orientations like Type C. For Durkheim change in the division of labour does not matter so much because of peoples conscious responses to it, but because of its effect on the types of places they can occupy in the division of labour.

The places (coal miner, steel worker, housewife) people have occupied give them particular "collective representations" and if their places change as a result of industrial change then so may their collective representations. For Durkheim place in division of labour affects collective representations but here we are surely talking about how one of these representations concerns the division of labour itself, or at least the manner in which it is understood? This is true, but the division of labour matters here only because your place in it affects how you think about everything - orientations to employment and training only get affected because they are part of everything. (Good examples of the effect of place in the division of labour on our thinking on all sorts of subjects which have nothing to do with the division of labour are given by Lawson, 1990, see for example p. 193 on social workers and Bauman, 1989 - see for example pp. 155-9,

and 1993. This theme is also relevant to the work of a much more obviously Durkheimian writer, Mary Douglas.)

Consider credentialism for example. In the Durkheimian view the importance of someone's job is not wholly or even mainly a matter of them seeing how important credentials are at work: for example, of people going in for credentialism because their parents are in jobs where they can see credentials matter (perhaps their father sees a graduate being promoted over his head). Rather, they go in for credentialism because their parents come to occupy places in the division of labour where they now think it is appropriate, indeed proper, to think in terms such as these for their children (this is where I might prefer to interpret the Jordan, Redley and James, 1994 material, and even Savage et al, 1992).

Relatedly, the Durkheimian view offers an alternative to the notion that people are responding to the needs of employers when social and industrial change coincides with increased credentialism. In this view certification frenzy is not the result of responses to employers' actions but of change in the places which are available in the division of labour which result in all sorts of changes in the way people think including a shift to credentialism.

To return to my argument, industrial change brings about changes in peoples places in the division of labour and therefore affects how they think of everything, including the division of labour itself. Thus some occupations make you amenable to Type B thinking, or to Type A thinking which sees jobs as immutable and giving meaning to everything around them (including education and training). Industrial change may therefore produce other occupations which lead to new collective representations which include the understanding of the division of labour as being a division between groups - crafts or companies for example - which one can then aspire to join.

At this stage in our research it would seem to be sensible to look first for such occupations where the potential for a change in the division of labour is greatest and this must be amongst the employees of foreign firms that have recently established themselves in South Wales. We need to be careful, however, in thinking through the processes involved. I suggest that this would not be a matter

of orientations to education/training born in other cultures somehow rubbing off on UK workers and that inward investment would only affect orientations (and the way that people get into work) "indirectly".

The incoming employers can poach labour (in fact they may be even more proficient at it according to ongoing work by Cockrill, Scott, Fitz and Cooke) and import skills just like ordinary UK employers but surely the orientations spawned by the culture of their home societies are embedded in their organisation and therefore will somehow automatically be passed on to their UK employees? Perhaps, but I doubt such a simple connection: inward investment cannot be expected to have an effect on cultural attitudes except in so far as it works indirectly on orientations through the creation of group loyalties.

CONCLUSIONS

Human capital represents a typical (and thus blunt) Utilitarian way of getting at real orientations (to education and training in this case), three of which (or at least their ideal types) have been discussed here. I suggest that human capital theory represents a serious obstacle to understanding these orientations and, therefore, to understanding that two out of the three orientations identified here get in the way of economic success while the third is a prerequisite of it.

All employers hold to Type A orientations and can only rely for innovation and competitiveness on an extra ingredient which is always (and can only be) provided by the workforce. This ingredient is, however, absent where people hold to Type A and do not see themselves as the consumers of education and training. Such workers will only undertake the minimum, non-transformative, mimetic education and training that their employers will insist on, and there is nothing in this to help the development of a high-wage, high-skill economy. The same can be said of Type B which simply produces credentials with no guarantees of useful content. Now I want to add a final word on policy.

In so far as they concern themselves with orientations towards education and training, the working assumptions of policy-makers in the UK for a decade or more appear to have been derived from human capital theory. Where policies do take account of orientations the idea seems to have been to encourage more people to invest in their human capital (and for existing investors to make more

of an investment). Thus education markets, vouchers and so on can all be seen as attempts to make people behave in this way. Since these policies were first put-forward by right-wing thinkers who claim an intellectual kinship with classical Utilitarians like Adam Smith this faith in human capital theory is hardly a surprise, but since they take no account of the real orientations people have to education and training they are doomed to fail. Or, rather they are doomed to have some effect other than on peoples decisions to invest in their human capital.

Thus policies designed to increase our investment in human capital may actually lead only to an increase in credentialism which I have already demonstrated does nothing to improve our chances of success as a high-skill, high-wage economy. Type B orientations may not be so common in some other countries (though this obviously excludes the US) and now we understand that, if Type B is not so common in Germany or Japan, this may be an asset to those countries and policies which have the effect of increasing the prevalence of Type B in the UK may not be a very good idea.

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